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ABSTRACT

This presentation describes a curriculum revitalization project begun in Spring, 1983 in Baxter Springs, Kansas. The cooperative "effective schools" effort used a broad base of support to establish a director of curriculum, create new school-university ties, focus a reading K-12 curriculum improvement effort, and hold instructional leadership sessions for district administrators. The Baxter Springs Board of Education shows continuing support for these curriculum efforts, which are the result of cooperation among educators, students, and the community at large. Success of the program relied upon the common effort to develop motives and processes for school improvement. A school improvement team should be selected and given time to work with all the school's constituents. In Baxter Springs, seven correlates developed by Lezotte and Bancroft (1985) were used to assess school needs. The correlates included such items as a safe and orderly environment, a clear and focused mission, and frequent monitoring of student progress. Responses to a questionnaire by nine rural school boards overseeing "effective schools" were categorized under each of the seven correlates. Questions dealt with such issues as the extent of teachers' non-teaching duties, long-range planning by principals, staff evaluations, home-school relations, and student attendance policies. This document outlines the questionnaire results and describes plans for a weekend training session for school board members. The document also includes a copy of the questionnaire and a description of the seven correlates. (TES)

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INTRODUCTION

Our presentation will be organized into four sections. Section One will establish a context by providing you with a brief sketch of the philosophy and functioning of the district-wide curriculum council in Baxter Springs, Kansas, a school district of 912 students, kindergarten through twelfth grade.

The second section will detail the seven correlates embedded in the effective schools research. The emphasis in this section will be on the activity patterns necessary to implement the effective schools' concept.

Section Three reflects the results of a questionnaire study designed to elicit practices of school boards in effective rural schools.

The fourth section will detail phase one of a training program for the Board of Education in Baxter Springs, Kansas.

SECTION ONE - BAXTER SPRINGS: A CONTEXT

For those districts who are active in curriculum revitalization, there are several approaches that can be considered. Perhaps "reflex-like" reaction to dictates from the central office, boards, state departments, and volatile parent groups. Or perhaps slickly packaged, canned curriculums written and developed by those outside of the district educational environment.

In the small school system of Baxter Springs, Kansas, however, a climate has been nurtured that fosters effective and cooperative efforts toward curriculum re-vitalization. Those efforts began during the late spring of the 1982-83 school year and continue to grow and develop into 1989. The approach was not conceived as a finished blueprint, but rather as a developmental effort that, to date, has yielded seven major activities: 1) established the position of Director of Curriculum, 2) articulated a K-12 master curriculum plan, 3) formally involved certified staff, patrons, and students in the curriculum process, 4) established a university/school partnership, 5) initiated an on-going formative evaluation procedure to focus and refine the planning process, 6) focused a curriculum improvement effort on reading K-12, 7) developed and held instructional leadership sessions for district administrators.

The clarity and focus of the effort in Baxter Springs involves the input and vision of all the constituencies that comprise a school district. Support for improvement exists at all levels: teachers, students, patrons, and administrators. This approach has provided a forum from which views can be shared, re-shaped, disgarded and/or implemented. The philosophy of this approach is grass-roots, bottom-up with a broad base of support being developed within the districts constituency which targets areas of need and courses of action.

A clear example of this philosophy was in the drafting of district-wide educational goals. The first draft of the goals was shared with all teachers, administrators, students, parents, and a random sample of patrons in Baxter Springs. All phases of the work on the district-wide goals were discussed in the local newspaper with readers encouraged to offer input into the process. Two important dividends resulted from this effort. First, the teachers gained insight into the ability of their students to

question constructively and to contribute to the goal-making process. The teachers still comment proudly about the seriousness displayed by their students. Secondly, the community responded most favorably to the task, and the language of two of the district goals directly reflect community input - a most welcome development. As a result of this level of commitment, a committee composed of a teacher, a parent, the Director of Curriculum, and two students, has developed a plan which has been implemented for two students to serve on the curriculum council. These students are to be high schoolers, but have responsibility for channeling the thoughts of students from kindergarten through high school into the curriculum deliberations.

The continuing support of the Board of Education for these curriculum efforts as evidenced by: monthly release time for teachers on a half-day basis, for council meetings, costs of conferences, testing materials, and consultants has been instrumental in the success of this effort.

SECTION TWO - EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS CORRELATES AND PROCEDURES

Before applying the seven correlates of effective schools (see Table #1) at the school site a common effort to develop the reasons and processes for their utilization is a must for those to be involved in the process: administrators, board members, teachers, patrons, and students.

According to Lezotte and Bancroft (1985) two specific questions need to be studied and discussed:

1. What is the motive for school improvement? (p. 54)

2. What will constitute evidence of school improvement in your school or district? (p. 55)

The staff needs the opportunity to become familiar with the research and helped to understand the relationship between the research and their own instructional practices as this has the potential to lower the anxiety for the change process.

A school improvement team needs to be selected that will be open to all segments of the school's constituency. The success of this team is to a large extent based on the

time made available for them to work and their willingness to address the two aforementioned questions.

A shared consensus does much to move this process down the road to effectiveness. As the team works to develop goals for the effort it is important that goals include change in student outcomes across the total student population. A review of current and past testing will be necessary with results from both cognitive and affective instruments deemed important in the process (Lezotte and Bancroft, 1985).

The seven correlates should be used to assess the needs of a specific school. The data from needs assessments, including such instruments as parent surveys and self-concept inventories, provide a basis for the development of a plan for improvement. With this information in hand, approaches to solve or meet the goals are appropriate.

Once these recommendations for improvement have been determined they should be circulated to the entire staff, random samples of parents, and students for feedback and refinement. The highest level of support and agreement should be sought. It is important to remember there is no quick fix, thus a time table is a desirable component of an improvement plan. It is not necessary to toss the baby out with the bath water, so the team will want to protect and nurture the best from past practices along with the improvement plan (Lezotte and Bancroft, 1985).

This process provides ownership and commitment for the people involved in the development of the plan and its implementation. Several activity patterns for the schools constituency are vital to the cause:

1. Shared decision-making
2. Opportunities to become familiar with the research and its implication for instruction
3. Time provided for the effort
4. Selection of a team
5. Consensus building
6. Goals for improvement
7. A review and study of outcomes in both the cognitive and affective domains
8. Application of the seven correlates
9. Needs assessments and surveys
10. The articulation of the plan for improvement

Widening the ownership and an open structure for school and district improvement provides a climate for the effort to continue. Successes are expected and problems are worked out, dead ends are re-navigated, and attitudes are positive.

SECTION THREE - THE QUESTIONNAIRE STUDY

With the gracious help of Lawrence Lezotte's staff and others we were able to identify twenty rural schools (under 2,000 students as total district enrollment) that have been adjucated as effective by utilizing the effective schools criteria including Stedman's (1987) reconceptualization of the variables.

Each of these schools was sent a questionnaire (see Attachment A) to be completed by their school boards. Of the twenty questionnaires sent, nine were completed yielding an overall return rate of 45 percent.

To facilitate interpretation of the questionnaire data, allow us to step back and share the construction of the questionnaire with you.

A review of the effective schools literature was undertaken with a goal of unearthing the correlates embedded in the effective schools movement. This review yielded the seven correlates listed in Table 1. Using the operational definitions of the correlates, a pool of approximately one hundred questions was developed by the authors. This pool was reviewed for clarity and redundancy by the authors and two volunteer board members. The process yielded fifty-five closed and open-ended questions.

These questions were then clustered under the seven correlates to ensure coverage of the correlates yet weighed in such a fashion to reflect the role of the school boards. Thus, while each correlate has at least two questions, "Climate Of High Expectations For Success" and "Clear And Focused Mission" were deemed the most important for board activity and had sixteen and thirteen questions respectively.

The results of the study will be discussed by using the seven correlates as section headings. Given the length limitations for this manuscript, only those closed items with 85 percent agreement or better and the open-ended items will be discussed. The reader is directed to Appendix A - a reproduction of the questionnaire with all response rates and comments.

Safe And Orderly Environment

Four questions, two closed and two open-ended were utilized to obtain information about this correlate. In the area of teacher/teaching continuity, 100 percent of the respondants indicated a negotiated sick leave policy, and 89 percent indicated a negotiated agreement for re-assignment procedures. The open-ended items were more pointed in their wording with question fifty-one stating: "How do you ensure an orderly school environment?" Only two respondants answered this question, with one stating a district-wide discipline code and the second respondant indicated building level panels to address needs and strategies to meet the needs. Three respondants addressed question fifty-two: "How do you ensure an attractive school environment?", with the generalized response being a vigorous and systematic maintenance program.

Climate of High Expectations For Success

Sixteen items - twelve closed, three open-ended items and one combination item were utilized in the study. Eighty-nine percent of the respondants indicated that they have freed their teachers from such non-teaching duties as hall and lunchroom duty. One hundred percent indicated a negotiated agreement stipulating provisions for the amount and frequency of planning time. From an economic perspective, 89% of the respondants have a budget line for staff development; and a financial structure that allows for funding of individual school improvement projects. Within the open-ended format, all of the respondants indicated at least one of the following action patterns: effective schools study groups, performance objectives, building SIP's, staff development, monitoring of achievement and other effective schools correlates, and board adopted policy that includes mission, planning, goals, documentation and assessment.

All respondants stated that they had a system of regular evaluation for both teachers and principals. The length of building principal contracts ranged from one to three years with the modal response being one year. Superintendent contracts ranged from one to four years with a mode of three years.

Instructional Leadership

All of the respondants indicated a requirement for principals to make long-range goals. Further, all respondants indicated that this had to take the form of cooperative goal setting involving the teachers. To accomplish this task administrators were afforded:

inservice, school visitations, professional conferences and principal academies. At the other end of the spectrum, all respondants indicated the administration would be reviewed by the board prior to any dismissal procedure. Further, all respondants indicated that their negotiated agreement with teachers also spelled out the procedures for termination. In terms of board leadership style the open-ended question yielded the following strategies to be visible within the district: attending school functions, rotate board meeting to various schools, school tours, attend staff development and inservice sessions, interview principals, teachers and students, and observe effective instructional strategies in the classroom setting.

Clear And Focused Mission

All respondants indicated that their district policy reflected school improvement as a key priority. This manifested itself in the 100 percent responses to the item of district instructional improvement as a clear expectation in the hiring and evaluation of new staff. One hundred percent indicated the utilization of written job descriptions for administrators. Further, 89% of the respondants indicated this activity took place within a framework that had each school setting its own priorities and utilizing understandable teaching objectives. To accomplish their tasks, board members have had weekend retreats, on-going training involving state board associations, Kelwyn training tapes, and consultants associated with the effective schools movement.

Opportunities To Learn, And Student Time-On-Task

Two questions, one reaching criterion level, were included for this correlate with 100 percent of the respondants indicating that their negotiated agreement with teachers contain provisions for the length of the teaching day.

Frequent Monitoring Of Student Progress

While none of the four items utilized had response rates meeting the criterion level, the simple majority of the respondants indicated system-wide policies relating to student attendance, promotion and achievement.

Home-School Relations

All of the respondants indicated that they made concerted efforts to get good "PR" before the public. These efforts took the form of: district newsletters, school newsletters, district brochures, newspaper supplement, radio program, recognition awards, published district and school report card, and the staffing of a communications coordinator position.

In addition to PR work, eighty-nine percent of the respondants indicated opportunities for parent involvement through: Parent-teacher conferences, principal-parent forums, curriculum nights, open houses, superintendent-parent forums, and parent membership on textbook selection committees.

While there is variability in the data, a clear trend is that in effective schools, boards of education assume a visible, proactive role.

SECTION FOUR - THE BOARD TRAINING PROGRAM

Working with a school board requires the realization that one cannot check their teaching skills at the door. While empowered politically, school board members are laypeople and to build approach behaviors to the educational process requires good, sound pedagogy. With that in mind, we set about designing a program that would include large group, small group and individualized instruction including a segment of "hands-on" activity.

Further, we wanted to capitalize upon Kelley's (1951) ideas embedded in the workshop way of learning - that is, total immersion in the issues away from the telephone, bills and routines of their everyday worklife. Arrangements are being made to hold the Friday-Saturday program in a hotel in the Eastern suburbs of Tulsa, Oklahoma. The schedule has been arranged so that a group of folks with divergent skills can work and play together related to their convergent interest of a better education for the young people of Baxter Springs.

The Friday afternoon session will begin with a discussion of the questionnaire study previously detailed in Section Three of this paper. In addition to the discussion of the results, the board members will be asked to complete the individual phase of the 1-3-6 consensus building

technique prior to the Saturday 8:30 a.m. session. The board members are being asked to prioritize the questionnaire findings as to their importance in the policy and operation of the Baxter Springs Public Schools. They will develop an individual priority list and then build a consensus list, first in groups of three, and finally in a group of six. The "three-six" segment of the technique will take place during the 10:00-11:30 a.m. Saturday session.

Following a leisurely cash bar and dinner the participants will have a formal, whole group presentation by Ms. Kathleen Homlish of the Kansas State Department of Education. Ms. Homlish will speak on "Effective Schools Research And Its Relationship To Outcome Based Education In Kansas". The remainder of the evening will be free time to allow participants to socialize and discuss the issues on an informal basis.

The opening session Saturday morning will be a variety of "hands-on" activities to work on the affective/attitude dimensions of effective schools implementation. One such will be an adaption of the "Future School" game - a board game designed to acquaint individuals with the issues/behaviors involved in the implementation of effective schooling. For example, one stop on the board requires a drawing of a Knowledge card such as: "Active involvement is the key to creative learning"; agreement with this statement allows the player to move ahead three spaces.

Another feature of the game is a free-draw space where players will have one minute to pursuade other players to vote to implement the proposal. One illustrative proposal is: "Use the total community as an educational resource". The player will be allowed to move ahead the same number of spaces as the affirmative votes received for the proposal.

Following the "hands-on" activities the participants will be asked to complete the "three-six" phase of the consensus building technique; the goal of this activity being the establishment of priorities for Board activity over the next couple of years.

The final workshop session will be a whole group session to articulate courses of action with the Baxter Springs School Board in the area of policy-making that utilizes the input of all constituencies in the district. It will be our duties as facilitators to help the board identify tasks which can be completed during the remainder of the school year and tasks that have a high probability of

success as it is important for board members to experience the feelings that accompany success.

It is our desire to end this session by sketching out phase two of the training which we hope will include at least twenty-five percent of a monthly board meeting being dedicated to the "effective schools" activity as a way of ensuring momentum for the district-wide effort.

Kelley, E.C. (1951). The Workshop Way Of Learning, New York: Harper.

Lezotte, L. and Bancroft, B. (1985). "School Improvement Based On Effective Schools Research: A Promising Approach For Economically Disadvantaged And Minority Students". In the workbook for the 5th Annual National School Effectiveness Workshop, Phoenix, Arizona, January 15th-18th, 1988.

Stedman, L. C. (1987). "It's Time We Changed The Effective Schools Formula". Phi Delta Kappan, 69, 215-224.

Table 1*

SAFE AND ORDERLY ENVIRONMENT

At the school site there is an orderly, purposeful, business-like atmosphere which is free from threat or physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.

CLIMATE OF HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR SUCCESS

There is a climate of expectations which the staff believes and demonstrates that all students can attain mastery of essential skills and they believe that they have the capability to help all students attain mastery.

CLEAR AND FOCUSED MISSION

Clearly articulated school mission through which the staff shares an understanding of and a commitment to the instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures and acountability. Staff accept responsibility for students' learning of schools' essential curriculum goals.

OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN, AND STUDENT TIME-ON-TASK

Teacher allocates a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential skills. For a high percentage of the time, students are engaged in whole class or large group planned, teacher directed learning activities.

FREQUENT MONITORING OF STUDENT PROGRESS

Use of specific variety monitoring devices to assess progress individually in both the effective and cognitive domains in a disaggregate manner. Developing strategies for instruction and planning based on outcomes. Student progress is measured frequently.

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS

Parents understand and support the school's basic mission and are given the opportunity to play an important role in helping the school achieve their mission.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Principal acts as instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates that mission to staff, parents, and students. The principal understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program.

*Adapted from the text, pages 71-73, of Lezotte and Bancroft (1985). "School Improvement Based On Effective Schools Research: A Promising Approach For Economically Disadvantaged And Minority Students". In the workbook for the 5th Annual National School Effectiveness Workshop, Phoenix, Arizona, January 15th-18th, 1988.

Appendix A

SCHOOL BOARD SURVEY

1. Are there written job descriptions for teachers?

   A. Yes - 56
   B. No - 44

2. Are there written job descriptions for administrators?

   A. Yes - 100
   B. No - 0

3. Did you approach district wide instructional improvement one school at a time?

   A. Yes - 33
   B. No - 67

4. Do you require your administrators to have a democratic approach to supervision in their buildings? (i.e. input from teachers on needs for hall duty)

   A. Yes - 78
   B. No - 22

5. Are principals required to make long range goals to improve instruction?

   A. Yes - 89 - If yes, example please 3 yr. ITIP training program, KMCT improvement strategies, building SIP's yearly plans.
   B. No - 11 - School wide improvement and plans.

6. Does your policy manual contain procedures for establishing individual school improvement committees?

   A. Yes - 56
   B. No - 44

7. Do you have opportunities for administrators to be reviewed by the board of education prior to dismissal procedure?

   A. Yes - 100
   B. No - 0

8. Has the board of education provided release time from non-teaching duties for teachers? (e.g. hall duty, lunchroom duty)

   A. Yes - 89
   B. No - 11

9. Has the board of education required the staff to be evaluated on progress toward specific objectives?

   A. Yes - 78
   B. No - 22

10. Do board of education members visit schools on a regular basis?

    A. Yes - 67
    B. No - 33

11. If you answered yes to Q. 10, What type of involvement do you have in these visits? (i.e. interaction with students, teaching, attending school functions)

    School functions, board meetings at various schools, meet with principal and tour school, attend staff development session, inspect facilities, review district data, interview principals, teachers, students, attend building inservice, observe effective instructional strategies in the classroom setting.

12. How do you insure district instructional improvement? Effective schools study group, ITIP training, performance objectives, monitoring achievement, building SIP, staff development, hearing monthly reports on instructional issues, viligent monitoring documentation, assessment planning, board adopted policy including board mission, SyrSIP, established goals and published evaluations of goals.

13. Does district policy encourage a shared decision making of timelines for individual school improvement projects between teachers and principals?

    A. Yes - 78
    B. No - 22

14. Does the district require quarterly reports in terms of expenditures of district funds?

A. Yes - 67
B. No - 33

15. If you answered yes to Q. 14: Who has responsibility for preparing these reports? Business manager, deputy superintendent, treasurer and superintendent.

16. Does the district require quarterly reports in terms of students grades?

A. Yes - 44
B. No - 56

17. If you answered yes to Q. 16: Who has responsibility for preparing these reports? Guidance, teacher at classroom level, principal at building level, director at district level, superintendent.

18. What is the length of the superintendent's contract? 4,2,1,1-4,3,3,1,3,3, Mode = 3

19. What is the length of the building principal's contract? 1,2,1,1,3,2,1,3,1, Mode = 1

20. Does the negotiated agreement with teachers contain provisions for the length of the teaching day?

A. Yes - 100
B. No - 0

21. Does the negotiated agreement with teachers contain provisions for incentives for professional development?

A. Yes - 56
B. No - 44

22. Does the negotiated agreement with teachers contain provisions for incentives for curriculum development activity?

A. Yes - 44
B. No - 56

23. Does the negotiated agreement with teachers provide provisions for sick leave?

A. Yes - 100
B. No - 0

24. Does the negotiated agreement with teachers provide for re-assignment procedures?

A. Yes - 89
B. No - 11

25. Does the negotiated agreement with teachers contain provisions for the amount and frequency of planning time?

A. Yes - 100
B. No - 0

26. Does the negotiated agreement with teachers provide procedures for termination?

A. Yes - 100
B. No - 0

27. Has the board of education undertaken steps to increase teachers planning time?

A. Yes - 56 - If yes, example please Release time, 1/2 day released per quarter, group common curriculum teachers together for shared planning, increased elementary planning time at least 45 minutes per day.
B. No - 44

28. Has the board of education developed policies to control class size?

A. Yes - 56
B. No - 44

29. Does your policy manual contain procedures for release time for school-wide staff planning?

A. Yes - 56
B. No - 44

30. Is the district evaluation of certified staff in line with district goals?

A. Yes - 100
B. No - 0

31. In the hiring of new certified staff, is it made clear that they are expected to become involved with district instructional improvement?

A. Yes - 100
B. No - 0

32. Does your district have a system of regular evaluation of teachers?

A. Yes - 100
B. No - 0

33. Does your district have a system of regular evaluation of principals?

A. Yes - 100
B. No - 0

34. Does the district budget contain a line item for staff development in areas of diagnosed needs of teachers?

A. Yes - 89
B. No - 11

35. Does your school calendar provide opportunities for parents to visit school on a regular basis? (i.e. parent-teacher conferences, committee work, studies of performance)

A. Yes - 89 - If yes, example please Parent-teacher conferences, principal-parent forums, open house, curriculum night, PTA, textbook committee, superintendent-parent forum.
B. No - 11

36. Do you have parents who are involved at the building level who volunteer their time with no salary?

A. Yes - 78 - If yes, example please 1 to 1 tutoring math/reading, prep work, library volunteers, lunchroom, prevention of substance abuse training.
B. No - 22

37. Does the district financial structure allow funding for individual school improvement projects?

A. Yes - 89
B. No - 11

38. Do you have an administrative training program?

A. Yes - 78 - If yes, example please Inservice, visit other schools, conferences, principal's academy, Kelwyn training, annual program on paid-time.
B. No - 22

39. Have your efforts at improvement generated a need for more clerical help?

A. Yes - 56
B. No - 44

40. Does your district policy show that school improvement is a key priority?

A. Yes - 100
B. No - 0

41. Does your policy manual contain procedures for support of school-site administrative management?

A. Yes - 78
B. No - 22 - No, however hired full-time administrator for each building with no other responsibilities.

42. Are groups involved on a consensus basis in developing goals for schools?

A. Yes - 89 If yes, please circle groups
B. No - 11 involved:

Parents Teachers Students Patrons Administration
Different schools have different groups.

43. Do you have a cooperative teacher and principal approach to goal setting?

A. Yes - 100
B. No - 0

44. Do you make efforts to get good PR before the public?

A. Yes - 100 - If yes, example please Newsletter brochures, communications coordinator, news releases, recognition awards, annual report individual school newsletters, radio program, newspaper supplement, district and school report card.
B. No - 0

45. Do you have a system wide policy for student achievement?

A. Yes - 56
B. No - 44

46. Do you have a system wide policy for promotion of students?

A. Yes - 78 (at elementary level)
B. No - 22

47. Do you have a system wide policy for attendance?

A. Yes - 78
B. No - 22

48. Do you have understandable teaching objectives?

A. Yes - 89
B. No - 11

49. Does every school set a priority for achieving goals?

A. Yes - 89
B. No - 11

50. Are principals required to make long-range goals?

A. Yes - 100
B. No - 0

51. How do you insure an orderly school environment? District goal and policy, procedures: assertive discipline, and control theory; consistent positive reinforcement, consistently applied consequences; self-discipline, respect for school and self; effective schools model; building level panel using effective schools model, discipline code.

52. How do you insure an attractive school environment? Good maintenance program, good home-school relations; target of all constituencies; "I care" philosophy developed in students and teachers; effective schools model; building needs identified and supported by district coordinator of facilities and supplies.

53. Did the board of education receive inservice training related to the effective schools literature and findings?

A. Yes - 89
B. No 11

54. If you answered yes to Q. 53, Please circle those responsible for that training.

National School Board Association

State School Board Association (State Name, please West Virginia School Board Association - 1/2 day every 6 months.)

In-House Training
Week-ends.

Michigan Association of School Boards - Superintendent - on-going since 1983.

Larry Lezotte - monthly effective schools report to board.

Use Kelwyn training tapes - 6 hours.

2 weekend work shops.

On-going - monthly effective schools report to board.

Specific Individual (State Name, please Larry Lezotte)

55. How long was the training? See Above

Thank you for helping your colleagues across the nation!